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INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export-Midwest) and **Food Export USA-Northeast** (Food Export-Northeast) are seeking one or more individuals/companies to assist with any number of the following:

1. Provide direct educational support to small and medium sized food and agribusiness companies with a customer-service focus with a goal increase export readiness and solve issues directly related to international trade development.
2. Provide Technical expertise directly to Food Export-Midwest, Food Export-Northeast, USA-based suppliers, its members, and other stakeholders.

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by the appropriate International Marketing Program Manager. The contractor will also be expected to liaise with our State Department(s) of Agriculture and In-Market Representatives (IMR), as appropriate. The selected Contractor(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities beginning in October 2022 to December 31, 2023.

Attached please find the official Request for Proposal for details, requirements and deadlines.

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Monday, September 19, 2022. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

Please forward proposals to:

Ben Cortese
Food Export USA - Northeast
1617 JFK Blvd., Suite 420
Philadelphia, PA 19103 USA
Email: bcortese@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:

Brendan Wilson, International Marketing Program Manager

Food Export Association of the Midwest USA at 312-334-9200 or via e-mail to BWilson@foodexport.org

Ben Cortese, International Marketing Program Senior Coordinator
Food Export USA – Northeast at 215-829-9111 or via email to bcortese@foodexport.org

Request for Proposals Export Education Programs & Services Contractor

Background

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export – Midwest) and Food Export USA – Northeast (Food Export – Northeast) are not-for-profit export associations and whose primary function is to develop export markets for midwestern and northeastern (respectively) producers and processors of value-added food and agricultural products. Our members include state agricultural promotion agencies from twelve midwestern and ten northeastern states.

Both groups are participants in the Market Access Program (MAP) and Agricultural Trade Promotion Program (ATP), a federal program handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MAP and ATP are intended to boost the export of value-added food and agricultural products from the U.S. through a partnership between FAS and approximately seventy-five other industry-based trade organizations. This includes primarily commodity-specific groups, as well as two other unaffiliated regional groups similar to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast that handle the southern and western regions of the U.S.

The products covered for export promotion by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast include a wide variety of processed and semi-processed products found throughout the retail, foodservice, and food processing sectors. These include products or derivations of meat, dairy, poultry, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables, salty and savory snack foods, confections, beans, sauces and condiments, pet foods, beverages, canned foods, animal feeds, bakery products, pasta and many others. Marketing channels include mass market retail, specialty foods, convenience foods, private label, healthy/organic, food ingredients, frozen foods, and others. Additionally, Food Export – Northeast promotes benchmark seafood products from the northeastern U.S. including lobster, scallops, monkfish, Atlantic herring, squid, Atlantic mackerel, dogfish and skate.

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast are independent organizations that have been engaged in a strategic alliance since April of 2000. Through this alliance, the strategy and tactics of the organizations have been aligned so that the activities and services of each group are very similar with differences based primarily on geographic focus. Food Export - Midwest focuses on midwestern exporters and a series of eight overseas target markets, including Australia/New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Mexico.

Food Export -Northeast targets northeastern exporters and six overseas markets, including Europe, Central America, Canada, the Middle East, South America and the Caribbean. By collaborating, the activities and services of each organization are open to participation by companies from the other region. The net effect is that exporters in the Midwest and Northeast have access to a larger range of export promotion opportunities, while the limited staffs at Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast can focus on specific market development opportunities.

The states that are members of Food Export- Midwest include: Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and Oklahoma. Food Export – Northeast encompasses: New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

More information about Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast is available at: www.foodexport.org.

Scope of Work

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to assist with the implementation and management of our generic educational programs. These activities include educational seminars and webinars, export strategy consultation and coaching, export logistic troubleshooting, business to business meeting preparation services and Export Essentials education program.

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by the appropriate International Marketing Program Manager. The contractor will also be expected to liaise with our State Department(s) of Agriculture and In-Market Representatives (IMR), as appropriate. The selected contractor will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2023 program year (January 1 – December 31, 2023). Orientation of any new vendors will likely commence in October 2022.

In the Scope of Work sections below are more details on the activities for which Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast are seeking assistance. Most activities are coordinated in close partnership with our member state staff at various state agricultural promotion agencies. The specific duties and responsibilities assigned to a contractor will vary by activity and by year. Such tasks will be assigned by an International Marketing Program Manager.

The fee quotation(s) should be submitted as a rate per hour and/or flat fee for assisting with each of the programs and services as outlined in the Scopes of Work below. Vendors may choose to submit different rates per hour or set fee for various aspects such as: services, administrative fee, etc. Typically, pre-approved direct, eligible expenses related to carrying out the programs/services such as production of materials or travel costs are reimbursed separately.

I. **Scope of Work: Customized Technical Assistance**

Provide technical expertise directly to Food Export-Midwest, Food Export-Northeast, USA-based suppliers, its members, and other stakeholders. This could include expertise on any of the following topics:

- a. Why Export
- b. Classification of Products (HS Codes)
- c. Primary and Secondary Market Research
- d. Free Trade Agreements
- e. Pricing Products for Export
- f. INCOTERMS
- g. Documentation
- h. Logistics
- i. Regulations
- j. Communication with Overseas Buyers
- k. Financing for Exports
- l. Export Strategy
- m. Other topics relevant to small businesses, the food or agricultural industry, doing business internationally, exporting, etc.

The selected contractor would provide the following services:

1. Providing companies with telephone counseling (consultation) answering companies' specific questions about exporting Midwest/Northeast food, food ingredients, and agricultural products on the following topics:
2. Maintain a detailed log of company contacts, inquiries and time engaged with companies.
3. Provide monthly progress reports and maintain close communication with Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast.
4. Reviewing FAS and private sector reports and research which may be used in a qualitative and quantitative manner.

II. Scope of Work: Direct Export Support

With emphasis on customer-service, directly provide support to small and medium sized food and agribusiness companies in any of the following formats: 1) in-person seminars; 2) live or recorded content such as a webinar, video, or learning module, 3) written content for a general audience or a report for an individual company; 4) one-on-one assistance directly with an individual company; and/or 5) special projects as needed.

Exporting seminars are held in various Midwest and Northeast states to educate suppliers about exporting opportunities, to teach suppliers about the "How To's" of exporting and inform them of

services and export opportunities through Food Export - Midwest and Northeast programs. In addition, export seminars are also offered to other food trade associations.

In addition, webinars are a large part of our educational services and have facilitated reaching a wider audience and add considerable advantages over traditional onsite seminars such as interactive Q&A, real-time collaboration, and the ability to digitally archive for playback from a company website. Webinars are a cost-effective way to communicate information to our target audience, build our brand, generate quality leads and build strong customer and prospect relationships.

1) Speaker Contractor Tasks

Contractor will be responsible for working with the International Marketing Program staff at Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast to prepare an agenda and a PowerPoint presentation for the export seminars and webinars, and to serve as a speaker on the programs.

The seminar/webinar may include topics like:

- a. How to get started in exporting
- b. How to enter an export market
- c. Export pricing and quoting
- d. Export shipping and documentation
- e. How to track tariff reductions and quotas
- g. and other similar export related topics

Some of the seminars might be scheduled on consecutive days so domestic travel may be required up to three weeks of travel per year.

2) Webinar/Seminar Coordination Tasks

Responsibilities of the potential contractor include:

- a. Participate in the program year initial planning
- b. Develop a project plan with specific timelines
- c. Liaising with the appropriate State Department of Agriculture, as appropriate;
- d. Assisting with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- e. Developing the agenda/program
- f. Administrative requirements, including: management of the webinar system, setting-up final presentations, upload registrants into system, obtaining initial activity evaluation forms and follow-up on unanswered questions.
- g. On-site supervision
- h. Managing expenses to stay within the specified budget;
- i. Ensuring that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures and submitted to Food Export 30 days after the activity has been completed;
- j. Other responsibilities associated with successfully conducting the webinars/seminars.

III. Scope of Work: Export Essentials Educational Program

Export Essentials Online is an educational introduction to the fundamentals and logistics of exporting. Each section tackles an important subject and provides detailed information to assist

in answering your questions about exporting. Export Essentials consists of eleven modules that can guide companies to determine their export readiness, research and target their top markets and even create an export marketing strategy.

This program delivers export training to a targeted client base of the Associations, in order to allow them an online learning experience in export training, create awareness about the various export services, and assist them in preparing effective strategies in order to accomplish their export goals.

Contractor will assist with the management of the Export Essentials Educational Program for Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast by:

1. Acting as a “clearinghouse” for the flow of information, coordination, approvals, content, format and execution of program;
- b. Coordinating the approval process in conjunction with the appropriate staff at the organizations;
- c. Helping prepare promotional materials on the program in order to create awareness about its usefulness to the exporting community;
- d. Updating and revising the content of the sections, including web-references, test questions, hints, and answers;
- e. Providing any other insights, support and personal appearances, as deemed necessary by the organizations

IV. Scope of Work: Strategic Export Coaching

This program objective is to create successful small and medium sized enterprise (SME) exporters by providing proactive, customized advice and support to individual participants over a one to two year period. The Strategic Export coach will link companies to existing programs and services in a company-focused approach, almost like having its own hired export consultant.

That support will be customized to the needs of an individual firm, but contractor responsibilities primarily include:

- Conduct an initial assessment call with the participant to determine if the participant is appropriate for the program and identify how the program can meet their needs
- Create a customized curriculum per participant
- Development of an Export Strategy Plan
- Identifying Target Markets
- Developing a Country-specific Marketing Plan
- Targeting Participation in Export Assistance Programs
 - State Department of Agriculture or Commerce
 - US Export Assistance Center
 - Local Export Assistance
- Support participation in preliminary Food Export Programs:
 - Customized Technical Assistance
 - Online Product Catalog
 - Export Seminars and Webinars
 - Export Essentials Online
- Assisting with Food Export Event or Activity Registration, as appropriate

- Buyers Missions
- Market Builder
- Food Show PLUS!™
- Focused Trade Mission
- Assisting with Branded Program Prequalification and Application
- Advising re: Planning and Preparation for Trade Events
- Advising re: Follow-up after trade events
- Recommending next steps in market development
- Guidance on product/packaging modifications
- Offering referrals to other support services or vendors
 - Shipping and Transportation firms
 - Finance and insurance options
- Identify any certifications required
- Monitoring success at each step and modifying plans as indicated
- Document success stories and submit to program staff

V. Scope of Work: Special Projects

New and special projects are often undertaken by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export-Northeast. Outside assistance is often needed on these projects. Export Consulting Services are instrumental to the education platform Food Export offers.

Export Consulting includes providing assistance to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast staff and member states on developing strategies and implementing programs to better serve U.S. food and agricultural producers.

These services may include but are not limited to:

1. Recommend changes to current educational programming or develop new programming opportunities. All suggestions should be accompanied by a detailed plan to measure relevant results.
2. Work with the Communications Program staff in developing articles for the newsletter (Global Food Marketer E-Bulletin).
3. Review and provide advice on various market development programs and activities that are offered by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast i.e. U.S. Foodlink Project, choosing data systems, market research efforts, etc.
4. Attendance at our buying missions to provide export counseling to companies.
5. Work with U.S. exporters as a result of trade leads which are generated through our trade lead system or through buying missions.
6. Advise senior management on ongoing or new trade developments/disruptions that may affect the processed food industry.

The responsibilities of the contractor for these projects would be to work with the International Marketing Program Manager to provide input on a plan of work for the project, as appropriate, and to provide the assistance required.

In addition to the above, Contractor is expected to assist Association with:

Referring participating importers and exporters to other relevant services offered by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast, the FAS offices and other service providers that can further assist them in achieving increased sales/purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products. Contractor will also assist Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast evaluate participants in these various educational programs and provide leads for success stories.

Requirements and Submitting a Proposal

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience in planning and conducting similar activities for food and agricultural products, and working effectively with people and by telephone, email and in person. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The proposal should also include the names of the individuals who will be conducting the work and the qualifications of the proposed individual / vendor. The proposal should also include references. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated projects. In addition, please provide the following information:

1. Name of Entity (as it would appear on contract/invoices)
2. Main point of contact
3. Complete Mailing Address / Physical Office Address
4. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country)
5. Type of Structure (choose one):
 Individual Corporation LLC Partnership Sole Proprietorship

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast reserve the right to not award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to three (3) years.

Selected vendors may be requested to participate in interviews with Food Export staff and/or its representatives.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by Food Export –Midwest and Food Export – Northeast Terms and Conditions:

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information should contact us. Food Export - Midwest and Food Export – Northeast do not tolerate fraud in their programs or services, and expect all participants to comply with our code of ethics (www.foodexport.org/codeofethics).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com or 1-855-727-6715 (domestic toll-free.)

We reserve the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of Food Export – Midwest or Food Export – Northeast does not comply with MAP and/or ATP; FAS; Food Export – Midwest or Food Export – Northeast regulations or policies, or otherwise reflect positively on them; their members states; FAS; or USDA, in pursuit of their mission of increasing food and agricultural exports, or for continued public support for their programs. For more information please see our Terms and Conditions located at www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by the provisions contained in Section 202 of Executive Order 11246 (30 Federal Register 12319) with regard to employment and contracting practices. In addition, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast require that its contractors may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast acceptance of proposal is conditional upon contractor disclosing all existing relationship with another party that has the potential of impacting and/or influencing the contractor's ability to carry out the scope of work.

By responding to this request for proposal, you are certifying that your company nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency. If you are unable to certify to the preceding statement, but wish to proceed with a proposal to this request, you will need to include an explanation as to why you cannot certify this statement as an attachment to your proposal.

The contents of this Request for Proposal and Scopes of Work are confidential and business proprietary. They may not be re-used for any purpose, in whole or part, including any text, or related concepts, strategies or tactics described, without written permission from Food Export – Midwest and/or Northeast.

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Monday, September 19, 2022. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

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